

Mughals. We should not ask for more after being served such heady fare by the authors of this book. But the question of the various direct and indirect links and influences between the monetary system and the real economy still remains to be investigated—difficult though it is. Another issue is the relationship between the undoubtedly large 'gross' coinage of the Mughals and the net figure, in the sense of the extent to which the former included recoinage of existing coins. An appendix to Perlin's paper discusses some issues connected with quantifying the 'gross' figure, and there seem to be rather intractable obstacles.

One feels sorry to contemplate what a far cry from all this the 19th century is. Economists and historians of 19th century India seem to have totally by-passed the study of the monetary situation. Almost all that one can turn to for coming to grips with the tremendous developments in currency, prices and exchange rates then seem to be contained in a handful of references, dominated by official papers.

The question of recoinage of older coins arises when we look at the late 18th and early

19th centuries. Where did the vast gold and silver coinage of the Mughals and post-Mughal decades till early 1800s disappear? In loots, during the disturbed decades of the decay of the Mughal Empire, and the rise and then the fall, of the Marathas? How much must have disappeared into hoards inside the country, and how much left the country as private riches? The question arises again when in 1835 at one stroke the East India Company demonetised the entire existing coinage of rupees in India. It does not seem that much of the older coinage came to the Company's mints for recoinage. But why? Was there some inbuilt disincentive or vague fear of disclosing one's hoards?

For millennia, the precious metals have been prized as among the best long-term stores of value. Even poor countries have paid heavily—in terms of the labours of their ordinary citizens, to acquire these metals. Almost invariably, however, they have been possessed by the kings and emperors, grandees and nobles, the Nawabs and the latter day Nabobs—here is a neglected facet of the secular distribution of wealth.

further, he would know that primary teachers in AP and elsewhere are less qualified than teachers at any other level in the education system, that they are poorly trained, poorly paid, and are regarded as lowly subordinates by the junior-most officer of the education department, 'deserving' to be treated like dirt when they complain.

These conditions are "known enough. What is there to research is to see how they impinge upon the teaching-learning situation; in other words, what they *mean* to the child. Now to study that kind of question, there is no alternative to preparing oneself with adequate knowledge of child psychology and pedagogy in order to know what to look for. The next thing would be to sit for a few full days in schools *with* the children and to return to specific schools on random days. A research team could decide upon a schedule big enough to accommodate local variations while generating a large enough sample of observations to make sense of the general run of the 'event'. With this kind of data, one could make a lot of sense out of the information about socio-economic background of specific groups of children. One could also then be in a position to use the viewpoints of parents and teachers to get an overall picture.

This discussion could well suggest that I am about to criticise the study in hand on the basis of my preconceptions about what a good study on this problem ought to be. Such a reading would be valid enough, for indeed I cannot any more pretend to be objective about a study of early elimination which has the same lacunae that studies made over two decades ago had. I do wish to know why our researchers do not improve upon older studies, why they do not see theory building as a necessary part of their job. Why do they not pursue the obvious questions arising out of previous research? One such question I wish to discuss in some detail, for **to my** mind it has the key to better understanding of the early elimination problem. If we pursue it hard enough, we may soon be in a position to challenge the prevailing assumptions concerning the relation between mass poverty and poor attendance at primary schools.

The question is; why is the elimination rate as high between grades one and two? Let us take our data to pursue this question from Prasad's study (see Table A), Out of the total loss of some 75 boys and about 80

TABLE A: SCHOOL ENROLMENT AS PERCENTAGE OF ENROLMENT IN CLASS ONE

Enrolment	Boys	Girls
Grade One	100	100
Grade Two	54.9	51
Grade Three	41.5	35.8
Grade Four	31.8	25.6
Grade Five	25.5	19.5

Children and the Research Mill

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Wastage, Stagnation and Inequality of Opportunity in Rural Primary Education: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh by K V Eswara Prasad; Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, 1987.

DEARTH of research could, not be one of the reasons why the phenomenon of early elimination from school is so poorly understood. The Council for Social Development has published an annotated bibliography on this subject, listing over 500 studies. Some of the studies listed were generously funded, but that did not affect the design or the findings or even the quality of analysis and reporting. Apparently, research on this problem has found a profitable groove. All that is now left to do is to add details. The assumptions are clear enough. The major one is that early elimination (official term: 'dropping out') is caused by poverty and backwardness. The argument is simple: since almost all children who leave school early are poor, this kind of behaviour ought to be related to mass poverty. Another assumption is that primary education is available everywhere; so if some children do not avail it fully, the 'decision' must be their parents'.

It is easy to see that those who hold these assumptions view primary education as an event. All it demands of the child is to agree to be present, basically to show up, as long as the event lasts which is about five years. This perception of primary education makes no concessions to pedagogical theory. Characteristically, those who research early

elimination have no interest in learning theories or pedagogy, and they see no good reason to acknowledge their ignorance. Imagine a researcher of economic behaviour who never studied history or sociology. That would be similar to someone studying primary education without any knowledge of how children learn. If such knowledge were mandatory for persons eager to study wastage, stagnation and inequality in early schooling, they would be unlikely to see primary education as merely a long event.

The character of the event would then become an important variable. Some broad aspects of the long event are well known. The Fourth All-India Educational Survey had revealed the material conditions prevailing at primary schools at the end of the last decade. In the context of Andhra Pradesh—where the study under review was carried out—the survey had shown that 55 per cent of the schools were without permanent buildings, 59 per cent had no facility for drinking water, 95 per cent had no lavatories, 52 per cent were without blackboards, 49 per cent had no play spaces, and 70 per cent had no libraries. These few statistics should suffice to convince any researcher that primary schools in Andhra (and it would not be much different in other states) could not be seats of childhood bliss. If he probed

girls out of every 100 between grades one and five, the loss of 45 boys and 49 girls has already occurred between grades one and two. In other words, 60 per cent of the 'drop out' boys and 62 per cent of the 'drop out' girls belong to the youngest age group, attending school. Most likely, these children are five to seven years old. If these children are leaving school due to the economic necessity of their families, there ought to be a sudden jump in the children's labour value between grades one and two, roughly age six to seven. Surely we need a medical explanation for this sudden jump. Why would, otherwise, a parent send his child to grade one but withdraw him before grade two?

The question takes away the bottom out of the theory that early elimination has a satisfactory economic explanation in our conditions in the late twentieth century. It also hits the convention of asking parents why they 'withdraw' their children from school. The basis of such interviewing lies in the 'culture of poverty' theory which has had a great influence on Indian social research. The theory demands that we seek an explanation for the behaviour of the poor in their own 'rationality'. Once we have discovered this rationality, we can lay bare its irrationality. Thus at one stroke, the theory achieves two aims: first, it restrains the middle-class researcher from imposing *his* rationality on the poor, thus enhancing the objectivity of his research, and secondly, it shows the poor to be the architects of their own destruction, thus absolving the state or the classes that benefit most from the state's policies of any blame for the way the poor must live. The end product is: happy, guilt-free writers and readers of social research, and the perpetuation of the belief that the poor are responsible for their backwardness.

The study under review features a mixture of strategies. It combines some probing of the material conditions of schools and children's parents with the usual kind of data about how parents explain the 'decision' to 'withdraw' their child from school. The study covered 45 schools, from two blocks each of four districts; two in the Andhra region, namely, Guntur and Kurnool, and two in the Telangana region, namely, Medak and Mahboobnagar. The literacy rates of these four districts are, respectively, 36, 28, 21, and 19 per cent. Careful sampling of schools and a substantial review of previous research are the two strengths of the study. The findings and the discussion of the findings come as a disappointment since several previous studies had led to similar findings and discussion. Confirmation of existing insights could hardly have been an aim of Prasad's study.

Us main purpose was to assess the impact of the non-detention policy introduced by the AP government in the early seventies. The policy had little impact, not just in terms of its ultimate aim of encouraging the

growth of primary education, but even in a literal sense. It could not stop the practice of 'stagnation' which forces a child to spend more than the necessary amount of time at each grade level. One wonders why Prasad does not comment on the violation of the non-detention policy in this literal sense. Obedient response to the policy would consist of recording of the child's name in the next due grade each year, irrespective of his performance. This is what happens in quite a few other states, making any accurate analysis of early elimination impossible. Why didn't this happen in AP? Could it be that teachers there were not aware of the policy or were not under the kind of pressure that acts on them in some other states?

The data presented about school equipment in Guntur and Kurnool suggest the relevance of this question, in terms of the availability of several common school equipment Guntur appears far superior to Kurnool (Table 3.2). Now if we consider the rates of 'dropping out' and 'stagnation' in these districts, we find that Kurnool has higher drop out rates than stagnation rates, whereas the reverse is true for Guntur. In other words, children in Kurnool's school more often leave school altogether rather than stagnate in it, while in Guntur children stagnate in the school more often than leave it. I wish Prasad had tried to explain this contrast. In the extent one can seek an explanation from school facilities (which often reflect a mix of historical and political circumstances impinging on education), it seems that the sampled schools of Guntur function under greater care. This probably extends to school records and to the pro-

cedures for assessing children's performance from year to year. This may be one of the reasons why in Guntur teachers are able to make children repeat a grade without the fear of losing them.

Many segments of the data presented in this study could have led to deeper analysis than the researcher chose to do. The discussion of data does not go beyond describing what the tables show, a procedure that has become a distinguishing feature of Indian social research. The discussion of 'inequality of opportunity in rural primary education' (Chapter 4) promises to be serious, but gets bogged down by some rather thin data concerning the impact of caste, landholding, family income, and educational status of parents. The analysis reveals the expected truth, that poorer and lower-caste children, especially girls, are more likely to leave school early. *But why do they mostly do so in the first two grades at school?* On this moot question, Prasad has no more to say than this: "In early years of withdrawal it can be observed that none of the mentioned reasons dominate" (p 69). Now, if none of the socio-economic factors explain the phenomenon of 'dropping out' or 'withdrawal' in the patch where it occurs with the greatest intensity, that ought to warn us about some malaise in our research designs, assumptions, and perspective. Prasad does not take the warning, and ends his study with a tepid critique of the state's bureaucratic policies, and a plea for decentralised planning. It is hard indeed to feel excited about Prasad's critique and recommendations, for they present nothing new or promising.

NOTICE

IT is hereby notified for the information of the public that The Standard Mills Company Limited proposes to make an application to the Central Government in the Department of Company Affairs, New Delhi, under Sub-section (2) of Section 22 of the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969, for approval to the establishment of a new undertaking/unit/division. Brief particulars of the proposal are as under: 1. Name and address of the applicant: The Standard Mills Company Limited, Matatlal Centre, Nariman Point, Bombay - 400 021. 2. Capital structure of the applicant Organisation: Authorised Capital: Rs. 15,00,00,000/-; Issued & Subscribed: Rs. 11,05,55,300/- 3. Management structure of the applicant Organisation indicating the names of the Directors including Managing/Whole-time Directors and Manager, if any: The Company is managed by the Whole-time Directors, subject to the superintendence, control and direction of the Board of Directors of the Company, consisting of: 1. Shri Rasesh N. Matatlal Chairman, 2. Shri V. Ramadurai Whole-time Director, 3. Shri C.C. Maniar Whole-time Director, 4. Shri Russi Jal Taraporewala, 5. Shri Padmakant K. Shah, 6. Shri Harish Mahindra, 7. Dr. F.A. Mehta, 8. Shri J.P. Thacker, 9. Shri V.C. Vaidya, 10. Shri Pradeep R. Matatlal, 11. Shri M.L. Apte, 12. Shri R.C. Shah, 13. Shri A.C. Muthiah, 14. Shri R.S. Peddar, 15. Shri Deepak S. Parekh. 4. Indicate whether the proposal relates to the establishment of a new undertaking or a new unit/division: The proposal relates to the establishment of a new undertaking. 5. Location of the new Undertaking/Unit/Division: Backward area in the State of Maharashtra. 6. Capital structure of the proposed Undertaking: Same as per item No. 2. 7. In case the proposal relates to the production, storage, supply, distribution, marketing or control of any goods/articles, indicate: Name of goods/articles: Maleic Anhydride, Proposed Licensed Capacity: 10,000 Tons p.a.; Estimated Annual Turnover: Rs. 2700 lakhs. 8. In case the proposal relates to the provision of any service, state the volume of activity in terms of usual measures such as value, income, turnover, etc.: N.A. 9. Cost of the Project: Rs. 2900 lakhs. 10. Scheme of Finance indicating the amounts to be raised from each source: Term Loans/Debentures: Rs. 1510 lakhs; Internal Generations: Rs. 550 lakhs; Supplier's Credits and/or Foreign Exchange Loans: Rs. 840 lakhs. TOTAL: Rs. 2900 lakhs. Any person interested in the matter may make a representation in quadruplicate to the Secretary, Department of Company Affairs, Government of India, Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi, within 14 days from the date of publication of this notice, intimating his views on the proposal and indicating the nature of his interest therein.

FOR THE STANDARD MILLS COMPANY LIMITED
B.D. DATAR
SECRETARY

Dated this 21st day of September, 1988.

Registered Office: Matatlal Centre, Nariman Point, Bombay - 400 021.